BIOGRAPHY

John and George Armstrong at Edinburgh

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THE medical talent of the Scot which astounded the eighteenth century appeared at times as a family characteristic. Remarkable in successive generations of a Monro, a Rutherford, a Gregory, and a Duncan family, it came close to genius in William and John Hunter, as well as in John Armstrong, the poet-physician, and his brother George, the father of modern pediatrics, and the founder of the Dispensary for the Infant Poor, the world's first hospital for children.

The Armstrong brothers were sons of the manse at Castleton in Roxburghshire ; and grandsons of a general practitioner in the minor Covenanting centre of Kelso.

At the solemn signing of the Covenant, back in 1638, this Kelso doctor, John Armstrong, was about five years old. He grew up among the Presbyterian saints who, with faith as almost their sole weapon, defied prelates and kings for over fifty years. In the published accounts of those worthies, no Armstrong is named. Seemingly none of the clan was called on to " testify," or notably suffer, for their cause. If this seventeenth century doctor took part in their struggle for ascendancy, his service is unrecorded. But he did send his second son, Robert, to the College of Edinburgh, where " the students, as a rule, were on the Covenanting side."

Intended for the ministry, Robert required Latin, Greek, Logic, and Ethics in order to enter the Divinity Hall. He probably studied these subjects for the usual number of terms, or sessions ; but because of the destruction of the old College archives (Grant, I, 224), all that is now known of his academic career is that he belatedly commenced the course in Divinity, without graduating in Arts.

Born in 1661, Robert no doubt could have entered the church at the conventional age, had he been willing to accept theology from an Episcopalian Faculty, and ordination at the hands of a bishop appointed by a Stuart king. Not till 1688 was Scotland rid of the last of those kings. In the Revolution of that year, the cowardly flight of James II, at the approach of William of Orange, finally brought deliverance to the long and sorely tried saints. Victoriously, they swept the Episcopalians out of the Divinity Halls and churches ; and in their stead installed teachers of the word as revealed to themselves.

Under the new order, Divinity students did not graduate. Instead of a curriculum leading to a degree, they followed a prescribed course in Divinity, which was supplemented by collegiate training in ministerial practice. At the end of the course, the student received not a diploma entitling him to preach, but merely a testimonial, certifying to the

Presbytery—or district council of parishes—that he had been duly trained for the ministry. A contemporary of Robert Armstrong, the Reverend Thomas Boston states (p. 19) that he was certified as having "diligently attended the profession, dexterously acquitted himself in several essays prescribed to him and behaved inoffensively, gravely and piously."

The certificated candidate was examined by his Presbytery—an ordeal known as standing his trials—and, if approved, was licensed on probation. "I was licensed to preach as a probationer for the holy ministry," says Boston (p. 31), "near three years from my entering on the study of Divinity." By the time Robert Armstrong was ready to stand his Presbytery trials,* he had turned thirty.

Both he and the Presbytery seem to have been still puffed up by the triumph of the Revolution; he submitted a thesis on the perseverance of the saints; and the Presbytery required him to expound the text, "Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

After two years of probation, Robert was "admitted" in 1693, to the parish of Castleton. Extending over more than 250 square miles of wild, romantic Border country, this parish contained merely 1200 souls; yet, according to Stewart, it had given four martyrs to the cause of the Covenant. Besides ministering to the needs of his thinly scattered congregation, the Rev. Robert also acted as Moderator, or chairman, at the weekly session of the ruling elders of the kirk. The Session regulated the religious and moral affairs of the parish. Sitting in judgment on those "delated" by their neighbours, it imposed humiliation, such as the stool of repentance, and also inflicted fines, as well as other civil penalties. The proceedings of the Session were recorded by its Clerk.

The Castleton Kirk Session Records of the Armstrong era regularly mention the doings of the minister, and occasionally an event in his family. In these records are two gaps: the first extends from 1688 to 1695; the second from the beginning of 1711 to the close of 1749. Towards the end of the earlier gap, in 1693, the Rev. Robert brought to the manse the wife of his youth, Mistress Hannah Tennant.

If she had issue, none survived her. The account of her passing, given by the Castleton Session Clerk, reads: "1702. March 22. No sermon our Minister being called away to accompany his wife dangerously ill to Berwick. March 29. No sermon our Minister not being returned. April 5. No session. April 12. No session. April 19.

* "July 14, 1691. Mr. Robert Armstrong had the exercise (note 1) (Coloss I. 12), and additions; was removed and approved. His thesis 'de perseverantia sanctorum' was disputed. The languages and catecheticks, and as to the confession of his faith, and present church government, being removed, was in these as in all other parts of his trials, approven and licensed to preach in public." Minute of the Presbytery of Chirnside (note 2).

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No sermon our Minister being indisposed by reason of his wife's death." *

Though then past forty, the Rev. Robert quickly rallied; and went courting Mistress Christian Mowat (b. 1675). The church of the bride was the customary place for her wedding. As it is not recorded at Castleton, she probably belonged to some other parish. It took place not later than the beginning of January 1703; for, the following item occurs in the Castleton Session Records †: " 1703. Octr. 31. This day intimation was given from ye pulpit, yt yr would be sermon here upon Wednesday next in order to ye Baptism of a child of ye Ministers."

The child was a girl, whose name was not entered. It was the Scottish custom to name the first girl for the mother; but there is no word of a daughter named Christian. Nor is there mention of a son called Robert, after the father. The known children are Margaret, John, William, Helen, Elizabeth and George.

The only entries in the Session Records referring to the Rev. Robert's offspring are: one, in 1703; another, in 1707; and a third—inserted twice—in 1710. The latter read: " Octr. 8, 1707. Mr. Robert Armstrong Minr. and Mrs. Christian Muchit (*sic*) had a child baptized called Margaret . . . . 1710 . . . January 10. Mr. Robert Armstrong and Mrs. Christian Mowet (*sic*) had a child baptized called William."

John was the eldest of the known sons. For his birth no date has been suggested earlier than 1708, or later than 1709. Hence, he came after Margaret and before William.

Of the many who have written about John, there seems only one who has stated that the poet-physician was born in 1708. This statement is made without authentication; and the comment it renders unique is not otherwise well informed. John's academic and military records are no help in definitely determining the date of his birth. It is placed in, or about, the year 1709 by every available commentator, with the exception just mentioned. If the monument erected to John at the place of his birth be sufficient warrant for the date, he was born at Castleton in 1709.

The father, being Presbyterian, denied the absolute necessity of baptism, and deprecated as superstitious the christening of the newly born. Baptism on 10th January 1710, according to the present occupant of the manse at Castleton, the learned and Reverend Alan Millar Craig, M.A., " would indicate that William was born some time in December 1709." If William came at full term, John arrived either in February, or, more likely, in January 1709.

John was named for his grandfather, the Kelso doctor.

At that time Anne was Queen. As was his duty, the Rev. Robert

* Excerpts from a letter in the Library of the New York Academy of Medicine, written by the Rev. A. Millar Craig, M.A., of Castleton.

† Another item of that year reads: " 1703. May 23. No sermon our Minister being called away to wait upon his father dying."

prayed publicly for her, the reigning sovereign. However, his pleasure led him to name his next son after the Dutch Stadtholder, William of Orange, who had delivered the saints from the Queen's royal father in the Revolution of 1688.

At the death of Anne, in August 1714, the Crown was conferred on George, Elector of Hanover. In 1715, partisans of the Stuarts rose against the Hanoverian. Whilst others led out the fighting men of the Church of Scotland to battle for King George and Presbyterian ascendancy, the Rev. Robert was given the strength to sit still.

At Kelso, the Stuart Pretender was proclaimed king. The country around Castleton was in active revolt. An army of rebels, raised mainly from the neighbouring shires of Dumfries and Northumberland, invaded England, and penetrated as far south as Preston. After they had been hemmed in there, and the Highland forces of the Pretender had been checked at Sheriffmuir, the Rising of 1715 collapsed. In the aftermath, no one from Castleton appeared on the lists of the beheaded, hanged, exiled, or imprisoned.

Having disposed of the rebels taken in arms, the Hanoverians next proceeded against the Jacobites among the clergy. The Abjuration Act of 1719 ordained that every religious gathering of nine persons or more should pray, " in express words," for King George. At the kirk of Castleton this law was doubtless fulfilled with more than the legal requirement of fervour ; and at the manse, a son born to the Rev. Robert's old age was expressly called George.

To support a wife and at least six children, to keep a pony on which to reach the remote parts of the parish, to maintain the manse in repair, and to meet the demands of charity as well as such other costs as fell to his office, the Rev. Robert received a tenth, or teind, of the fruits of Castleton. Teinds were paid partly in money and partly in kind. The crops were measured in chalders (note 3), usually of oatmeal and barley. The minister's share of the average harvest was seventeen chalders. With the manse went a glebe of 25 acres, half of it arable. The glebe could not always be rented, and the value of the chalder varied with the market price of the crops ; but taking the good times with the bad, the Rev. Robert's stipend, exclusive of the manse, amounted at most to eighty-two pounds sterling a year (note 4).

On such a stipend, prodigies of economy were required, if the sons of the manse were to be trained for careers. The road to a career lay through the University. It was a long road, calling for an early start. Few set out earlier than the sons of the Rev. Robert. So diligently did he instruct them, and so well did they learn, that as soon as they were old enough to leave the manse, they were able to enter the University.

John arrived at Edinburgh, probably by carrier's cart, for the opening of the winter session, of 1720. At the convenience of the respective professors, the classes started in October (note 5) ; and some

seven months later trailed one another to a finish. As all classes were conducted in Latin, this was the subject of the first year. John enrolled in the Latin class that opened about October 1720; when he was eleven.*

Rationed partly from home, he lived in lodgings at a cost which can now be only conjectured, but of which a reasonable estimate for room and board would be four English pounds, seven shillings, and sixpence, a seven-month session (note 6). A lift on the carrier's cart from Castleton to Edinburgh and back—some 70 miles each way; together with such incidentals to study as books and writing materials, might account for another pound. And as the professor charged a fee of twenty shillings for the class, the basic cost of John's first session in Arts may have been more than six English pounds.

Besides attending the Latin class, John matriculated. In those days, the student matriculated not as a *civis* of the University, but as a member of a particular class. During the second half of the session, sometimes in January, usually in February, and occasionally in March, those who wished to matriculate were assembled in the Library where the name of the professor, and the subject of his class, together with the date, were then inscribed in the Matriculation Register. Beneath the inscription, the first four or five to enroll wrote their names across the top of the page; and the rest signed in straggling rows and columns. Under the heading, "Discipuli Domini Laurentii Dundass, Humaniorum Literarum Professoris, Qui Vigesimo-Nono Die M. Martii, MDCCXXI, subscripserunt," John Armstrong registered.

No official record seems to exist of the fees the students paid for the class. To matriculate in it, there was a further charge of thirty shillings Scots, or two shillings and sixpence in English money. The matriculation receipts went to the upkeep of the Library. In the Library Accounts, John is credited with the payment of thirty shillings Scots in March 1721. Thus, John was named in the University records twice that session; once, in the Matriculation Register and once in the Library Accounts.

Latin was the subject of the first year in Arts; Greek, for the second; Logic with Metaphysics, for the third; and Ethics with Natural Philosophy, for the fourth.

According to Grant (II, 492), the average attendance at the end of the seventeenth century was 600 a year. In 1721, only 150 are listed in the Matriculation Register: the Professor of Ethics neglected to matriculate his class; 55 enrolled for Greek; 56 in Logic; and 44 registered for Latin, along with John Armstrong.

Matriculation was voluntary for those who came to learn, but not to graduate. The graduand, however, was required not only to complete

* According to Graham (p. 434), in Scotland then "the great bulk of the students were mere boys. They were usually from thirteen to fifteen years of age—some only eleven . . ."

the prescribed course, but also to make an official record of his studies by matriculating at least twice. During his fourth and last session in Arts, John matriculated for the second time on 27th February 1724.

It was seemingly the intention then that he should take a degree. At the end of that session, the course completed, John had only to sign the Book of Laureation, and pay the laureation fees in order to become a Master of Arts. As he did not sign, presumably the money for laureation was denied him. For some reason, the degree long intended for John on 27th February had become inadvisable before the close of the session in August 1724.

The intended degree would have helped the career of a minister; but there is no other hint that John was ever meant to emulate the Rev. Robert. To follow the profession of his Kelso grandfather, John had then to serve a master, as Dr John Rutherford, a son of the manse at Yarrow, had served Mr Alexander Nesbit.

On signing the indentures, the apprentice paid the master a fee, which varied with his prestige, and with the term of service. The term ranged, as a rule, from three to five years. In 1724, Alexander Monro charged an "unboarded" apprentice, indentured for three years and seven months, the sum of four hundred pounds Scots, or its English equivalent—thirty-three pounds, six shillings, and eightpence.

With board, Monro's fee would have amounted to more than half the yearly Castleton stipend. No doubt the Rev. Robert had counted the cost, and was prepared to meet it, at least in instalments: but John wavered.

Among the Edinburgh students of his day were the poets, "David Malloch, alias Mallet," and James Thomson. The latter, who came like John from a Roxburgh manse, had followed Malloch to London, where both were tutoring till their muse could support them.

John had written the essay that won the prize medal of an Edinburgh literary society. At fifteen, he could not decide whether to be immortal as an author or as a doctor. A degree in Arts would be useful to a writer, who like Malloch or Thomson, might first have to tutor. Denied the degree, but allowed to sample the study of medicine before being indentured, John enrolled in the anatomy class of Alexander Monro, in mid-October 1724.

Four years earlier, the Edinburgh Town Council had appointed young Monro (b. 1697) "Professor of Anatomy in this City and College." A painstaking and methodical genius, Monro kept a careful record of his business. He used no elaborate system of accounts. His earnings in fees, from "prentices," special students, and the scholars who attended his lectures, were all entered in a pocket-sized notebook, less than 8 inches long, by 5 wide, that served him from 1720 until 1749 and is now in the University Library.

It contains 188 pages, of which Monro numbered consecutively the first 89. Pages 1 to 7 were set apart for the "prentices"; 7 to 15

for the special students he tutored ; and the rest, for the scholars who attended his class.

In the part of the notebook reserved for the scholars, Monro made three vertical lines on every page, thus dividing it into four column. The first column numbered the scholars in tens. The second contained their names. The third named the master of the scholar who also was an apprentice, noted the degree of the rare graduate in Arts ; or was left blank in the case of the ordinary scholar. Opposite the name of such " prentices," or special students, as had paid an inclusive fee, either to Monro himself, or to some other surgeon with whom Monro had an agreement, the fourth column also was blank ; but, apart from an occasional blank of this sort, recorded the fixed amount of three pounds, three shillings sterling, or three guineas.

The sum of all the three guineas entered in the fourth columns, Monro called his " honorarium." To it he added the fifteen pounds sterling the Town paid him yearly as Professor of Anatomy. From this total, he subtracted the unpaid fees (" inde deficiencies "), and thus arrived at the " neat produce " of his year's lectures. In the winter session of 1724-25, the Honorarium amounted to £148.1.0, which, with the " salary " of £15, made the sum of £163.1.0. After taking from this sum " deficiencies " amounting to £14.3.6, there remained a " neat produce " of £148.17.6. It was derived from 58 scholars, of whom the fifty-first was John Armstrong.

To the left of John's name is the notation, " pd," signifying the fee was paid. To the right of the name, the third column is blank, indicating that John was neither an apprentice nor yet a graduate.

Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons, Monro's lectures were enlivened, in April 1725 by a mob, howling for vengeance on the robbers of graves. Lest the rabble destroy the anatomical specimens, Monro petitioned the Town to grant him " a Theatre for dissections " within the guarded gates of the University. The following session Monro was an intramural lecturer, but John had then turned from the study of anatomy to the writing of verse.

Towards the end of March 1726 (note 8), he was privately circulating the ode which begins :

> " Now Summer with her wanton court is gone
> To revel on the south side of the world,
> And flaunt and frolic out the live-long day.
> While Winter rising pale from northern seas
> Shakes from his hoary locks the drizzling rheum."

It was prefaced when published many years later by the statement that it had been written " to amuse the solitude of a winter passed in a wild romantic country." The session following his abortive start in Medicine, John had not returned to Edinburgh. Presumably, his father had refused to allow him to go.

That session, William was studying Divinity. On 26th February 1726, neglecting Hebrew for an hour, he became Master of Arts with

the one hundred and thirty-sixth graduating class. As Arts was a four years course, presumably he had started Latin in the session that opened in October 1721. Having been born in December 1709, William too had gone up to Edinburgh when he was eleven, the University age in the Armstrong family.

On William's admission to the University, the collegiate budget of the family rose to nearly thirteen English pounds—almost a sixth of the stipend. Approximately that level was maintained during the sessions 1722-23, and 1723-24. The following session John paid three guineas to try Monro's lectures, perhaps bought an anatomy textbook, and maybe dissecting instruments as well. That session, John's expenses may have reached nine or ten pounds, while William probably spent seven, attending the Ethics class, which straggled into August, and concluded the course in Arts. For that single session of 1724-25, the collegiate expenditure was at least sixteen pounds, or nearly a fifth of the stipend.

The manse could meet rising costs only with increased austerity. The parents, who made it their rule, found its yield decreasing with the years. There is no evidence that it ever produced more than the estimated sixteen English pounds.

The Rev. Robert, and Christian, his wife, might have lightened their Spartan lives by letting William wait till John was trained ; but that cost time, which the ageing father could spare perhaps less than money. Besides, the boys were of an age to study together. By imposing frugality at Edinburgh upon austerity at Castleton, the father planned to enable them to do so.

During 1722, 1723, 1724 and 1725 William's name does not appear on the roster of any Latin, Greek, Logic, or Ethics class : nor does it occur in either the Library Accounts, or the University Fee Book. During these years, the burden on the family finances made it imprudent to let him incur the avoidable cost of matriculation.

Unless he matriculated, William could not become a Master of Arts. The total fees for matriculation and graduation (note 9) amounted to one pound, eight shillings, and sixpence of English money, of which one guinea went to the Professor of Natural Philosophy. To save this sum, it was planned from the first that William should complete the four years study of Arts without matriculating ; and then, as his father had done, enter the Divinity Hall, without a degree. As planned, it happened. Lacking a degree, and without his name having once appeared in the University records, William started his theological studies in the winter session that opened in November 1725.

Owing to John's rustication, the burden of that session lay more lightly on the manse. As a degree would be helpful in the Church, William was told to graduate. The required record of studies was obtained by matriculating in two of the subjects he had already taken. His name appears for the first time in the Matriculation Register on the roster of Professor Robert Stewart's class in Ethics which registered

on 21st January 1726; and for the second time, among the registrants of Professor William Scott's class in Greek, on 18th February 1726. The degree followed seven days later.

As usual, it was conferred "privatim," without more ceremony than was entailed in signing the Book of Laureation. The three payments to the University, each of thirty shillings, Scots—one for matriculating in Ethics, another for matriculating in Greek, and a third for graduating—are all recorded in the University Fee Book.

When he began the study of Theology, William was fifteen, almost half the age at which his father had entered the Divinity Hall. Since 1688, no material change had occurred in the curriculum. The Professor of Divinity still presided over the Hall. In due course, he certified that William had satisfactorily performed the various exercises of the collegiate training for the ministry. To earn this certificate, William had attended the class of Divinity two hours daily for three and a half sessions, during one of which he may have studied Hebrew, and during another, Church History. Following a plan as frugal of time as of money, William likely was confined to the shortest course, and completed it, in 1728.

Except for an involuntary contribution of ten English shillings to the theological library, which the Professor of Divinity levied in lieu of a fee on every student of his class, the basic cost of the session was no higher in Divinity than in Arts. On the conjectural scale already used, William's essential charges for the session 1725-26 amounted to six pounds, seventeen shillings, and sixpence in English money; and for the rest of his course did not necessarily exceed that level. As this was less than half the taxable capacity of the stipend, the other half was available to let John resume his studies.

At Castleton, John had written not only the "Ode to Winter," which Thomson wanted to read, and Malloch suggested printing; but also certain other minor poems, as well as part of a tragedy based on the story of Tereus and Philomela, the King of Athens' daughter. Whether Literature or Medicine was to be John's career, Castleton was scarcely the place to pursue it. There is no word of him in that wild romantic country, after the winter of his solitude, 1725-26.

In mid-October 1726, the new Medical School started its first winter session. Beginning with the teaching of anatomy, the School had risen around Monro, and the pupils his lectures attracted. A Faculty of five had been constituted the preceding February, and now presented a comprehensive three years' course in the several branches of medical knowledge, leading to a degree. As John did not graduate till the School was almost six years old, he was not likely one of its students at the opening of its first winter session in October 1726.

Had he been ready to return to Medicine that session, what was left of the collegiate appropriation after paying William's modest expenses in the Divinity Hall could have financed at least one class a year in the new School. But seemingly John was still bent on being

a poet. His ode, though six months old, remained in manuscript. The search for a publisher could continue, no matter what John chose to study. Apparently he reverted to Arts ; for before being accepted as an M.D. candidate, he passed an examination in general knowledge, including Mathematics and Philosophy. It is, however, uncertain whether he became a pupil of the mighty Colin M'Laurin in the session 1726-27, or 1727-28.

In the summer of 1728, William, being nineteen, completed the Divinity course. A certificated college candidate was not eligible for admission to the Presbytery trials until he was twenty-one. As it was cheaper to wait at the manse, and as there he could help his aged father, presumably William then went back to Castleton.

Returning alone to Edinburgh, the sole beneficiary of the collegiate tax on the stipend, John probably entered the Medical School at the opening of the winter session of 1728-29. The seventh graduate, he necessarily completed the prescribed curriculum. It comprised instruction by all five members of the Faculty ; which he doubtless received. But no medical class being inscribed in the Matriculation Register, and no class fees being entered in the University Fee Book, there is no official record of his course in Medicine.

The only member of the Faculty who has left a list of the students that attended his classes, is Monro. In his notebook, the eighty-sixth in the class of ninety that opened on 15th October 1729, is John Armstrong—again listed as neither an apprentice nor a graduate.

During the years that Monro was the only professor, he was a Faculty in himself ; teaching not merely the anatomy of the body, but also the structure and function of the various parts, as well as their common morbid changes, and the ways to treat these surgically—and medically, too. After the School was organised, Monro's lectures may have been somewhat restricted in scope, but they still covered a vast field, which many a student gleaned more than once. George Cleghorn went over it five times : John Armstrong, twice ; once in 1724-25, and again in 1729-30.

Had John first entered the Medical School in October 1729, his graduation in February 1732 would imply that he received credit for the session of 1724-25 ; and that the three years' course could be covered in two. As he repeated anatomy, and graduated *insignitus*, it is unlikely that he started so late, and finished so hurriedly.

Graduation ended an ordeal, resembling a long-drawn out Presbytery trial. A candidate for the degree, John submitted a thesis, probably, first to Monro, who may have suggested the topic, *de tabe purulenta*. Approved by Monro, it was sent to his colleagues. Two months were required for adjudging the thesis. Then John sustained it before the Faculty ; and underwent a professional examination, both written and oral, conducted in Latin.

Sometime in November, or in October 1731, before being allowed to submit the thesis, John had qualified as a candidate for the M.D.,

by satisfying an examining board of the Arts Faculty, a board of which Colin M'Laurin was a member. As this preliminary examination in general knowledge took place only after proof had been furnished that the aspirant had completed the professional studies required for the degree in Medicine, John's medical course concluded before the winter session opened in October 1731.

Eleven years earlier he had first entered the University. While he was studying alone and with William ; while both were acquiring the liberal arts ; while William was completing the course for the Ministry, and John the course for Medicine, George had been growing and learning at Castleton. Tutored by his father, with the occasional aid maybe of John but more likely of William, George was doubtless ready to go to the University at the usual Armstrong age.

There he presumably took no longer than William to complete the preliminary course in Arts. The time taken by William was the same as by John ; and brought the one as well as the other to his professional studies in the first winter session after his fifteenth birthday.

In Monro's notebook, Mr H. Phillips, of the Edinburgh University Library staff, recently found the name, George Armstrong. It is the fiftieth on the roster of the class that opened on 15th October 1735 ; and the seventy-second, of the class that opened on 19th October 1737.

The George Armstrong of the second entry, together with Robert Pringle and eight others, inaugurated the Royal Medical Society on Saturday, 26th November 1737. As this George Armstrong appears in the *London Medical Register for the Year 1783*, not only as a 1737 member of the Medical Society of Edinburgh (p. 134), but also as the Physician-in-Ordinary to the Dispensary for the Infant Poor, he was John's brother.

Monro lists Robert Pringle in 1735, 1736 and 1738. Undoubtedly, the Robert Pringle of 1738 was the Robert Pringle of 1735 ; and the George Armstrong of 1737 was the George Armstrong of 1735.

In 1735, the name, George Armstrong, was new to the notebook, and was not the name of an apprentice. Anatomy being the first subject taught in the School, the professional studies of George seemingly began in October 1735. If he was then fifteen, the Armstrong age for beginning professional studies, George was born after October 1719, and before October 1720.

At the age of eleven, John had entered the University in October 1720 ; and William in October 1721. At the same age, George was ready to start his course in Arts, presumably, in October 1731.

When the winter session of 1731 opened, John was at Edinburgh finishing the thesis, and preparing for the final examinations ; William was probably at Castleton,* helping his father ; and the father, having

* The Reverend George Gilfillan says (p. 2) : " The poet's father and brother were both ministers at Castleton—the one probably the assistant and successor of the other—and are said to have been much respected for their piety and professional diligence,"

provided them both with professional training, and having completed the Biblical span of three score and ten, was starting a task he could neither postpone, nor expose to the hazard of avoidable delay—the task of ensuring a career for George. Intent on graduating, John was still a potential charge on the stipend ; but, as a degree was not everywhere essential to practice, it is unlikely that John would have been allowed to graduate at the cost of holding George back, even for a single session.

For printing 5 copies of a 15 page thesis, such as John's, Ruddiman's price was two English pounds. The fee for the final examination was probably three guineas. Including maintenance, John's necessary expenses from early in October 1731, until his graduation on 4th February 1732, might amount to almost eight English pounds. The basic cost of a session in Arts was less than seven. As the stipend could meet a collegiate tax of at least sixteen pounds a session, the entry of George to the University was no impediment to the pending graduation.

The Book of Laureation * designates John not only Doctor of Medicine, but " etiam Magister in Artibus Liberalibus." It was an Oxford custom to graduate in Arts as well as in Medicine. John may have adopted it partly to further his career in London.

Besides the official registration of John's degree in Arts, there is also the corresponding record in the University Fee Book, where the new graduate is entered as owing four pounds Scots, for the M.D., and one pound, ten shillings Scots, for the M.A.—a total of nine shillings and twopence in English currency. As John obtained both degrees on credit, he must have migrated with little money, too little to let him lightly delay his departure.

Before leaving, he wrote, " To Sir Hans Sloane Bart., President to the Royal Society and Colledge of Physicians, London." The letter (No. 4036, Sloane Collection, British Museum) begins, " Vir eruditissime dignissimeq." It is signed, " Tui observantissimus, Johannes Armstrong." And it diffidently presents the thesis.

An Edinburgh degree conferred no sanction to practice in London. In that area, the profession was policed by three bodies, of which one was " the Colledge of Physicians," whose President, Sloane, was a friend of Monro. As the President could facilitate the grant of a permit, or licence, to practise in London, the thesis—perhaps on Monro's advice—had been dedicated to Sloane. It was dispatched with the letter, dated, " Dabam Edinburgi 7° die Februarii, A.D. 1732 " ; which John followed, leaving George to his Latin.

* The entry reads : " 4° die Feb. 1732. Dicto die Johannes Armstrong etiam Magister in Artibus Liberalibus Renunciatus est dein Titulo-Doctoratus in Arte Medica, Insignitus, postqm Dissertationem suam de Tabe purulenta Examini Exposuiss^{t}. in Praesentia Professorum Medicinae et Phi^{ae} Mathiseos, et Humaniorum Literarum, et Loetog. coram Studiosorum coctu, nec-no sponsioni Academica subscripsisset."

Of his Latin class, about fifty matriculated in February 1732, but George was not among them—maybe owing to the cost of John's migration that month.

John would not likely have left, had his father been obviously ailing. On 16th April 1732, the Rev. Robert died. The death seemingly caught William unawares, without even a licence to preach. After standing his trials before the Presbytery of Langholm—of which Castleton was a constituent parish—he was licensed on 2nd August 1732. Castleton might have " called " him in due course ; but the overlord, Francis, Duke of Buccleuch, maintained his right to name the new minister, and nominated William.

With the stipend again in the family, and the mother once more mistress of the manse, there was apparently nothing to prevent George from resuming his University studies ; but he may have arrived a few days late for the opening of the following winter session, as William was not presented to the living till 16th October 1732.

The course planned for George, at William's expense, was too frugal for official record. George Armstrong's name does not occur in the Matriculation Register, the Library Accounts, the University Fee Book, or the Book of Laureation. William completed the Arts course without his name appearing in the University records : George may have done likewise. In any event, he was not an Arts graduate, according to Monro.

The notebook lists George both in 1735-36 and in 1737-38. Presumably, he was a student at the Medical School in 1736-37 also. Whether or not he followed the regular three-year curriculum is unknown. As he did not plan to graduate, he retained some freedom of choice in his studies, which he exercised at least to the extent of attending Monro's lectures twice. There is no evidence of his presence at the University after the beginning of April 1738, when the anatomy lectures came to an end.*

While attending Monro's class for the second time, George Armstrong became a founder of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh. The original minutes having been lost, a new minute book was started in 1742. Into it the secretary copied the following note of the Society's first meeting : " We whose names are subscribed oblige ourselves to observe all the following regulations. 1737, Nov. 26.† George Armstrong, James Scott, Mich. Dickson, Archd. Drummond, Robert Pringle, Thos. Wilkinson, Steuart Thriepland, Geo. Raitt, James Russell, Robt. Gusthart."

The original subscribers were all pupils of Monro ; and the notebook shows that seven out of the ten took the anatomy lectures more than once. Maybe the idea of the Society, as of most of the other innovations that enhanced the fame of the young Medical School, came from Monro. Apparently, he had been trying to foster such a

* *Scots Magazine* (1741), **3**, 371.

† Old style. December 7th, 1737, new style.

Society since August 1734, when he loaned the anatomy theatre to Cleghorn and five others of his students who had purchased a cadaver.

The founders of the Society did not subscribe their names in alphabetical order. The first to sign was George Armstrong, probably the youngest. The order of signing might have been fortuitous. It also might signify that George, perhaps at Monro's suggestion, had called the others together ; or that George presided over the inaugural meeting. In any case, he is the first recorded member of this celebrated Society. As already mentioned, his membership is listed in the *London Medical Register for the Year 1783*. And he remained a member till he died, on 21st January 1789 (note 10) : for the Society's books show that he never resigned.

When George commenced the study of Medicine in 1735, Monro had 94 students ; and the School, one graduate. In 1736, only John Fothergill took the degree. Monro's class numbered 123 in 1737 ; and two became M.D. When George completed the course in 1738, there were two graduates ; but he was not one of them.

Those who studied at the Medical School but did not take a degree were free to enter country, provincial, or colonial practice ; or to join the medical branch of the armed services. In like case with George Armstrong were five other founders of the Royal Medical Society. Although the founders were the élite of the student body, only four of the ten graduated. One of the four was Steuart Thriepland. He took the degree in 1742 ; and three years later became the principal medical officer in the rebel army of the gallant Young Pretender, Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

The Physician-General of the Government armies was John Pringle, M.D., a Roxburgh man, who from 1734 to 1742 had been joint Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh. The Professor of Mathematics, Colin M'Laurin,* organised the defences of the Scottish capital ; which fell to Prince Charlie after his dashing victory at Prestonpans. Setting out to invade England, the rebel army passed through Liddesdale on 8th November 1745 ; and on the way to Carlisle, says Somerville, detached a platoon to seize the Rev. William Armstrong of Castleton, who was exhorting the countryside to stand fast for King George and the Church of Scotland. William escaped, and fled into Northumberland.

Before leaving to join the Government forces in the field, Pringle had taken over the building, " behind Buckingham house," where Grosvenor Gardens now stand ; and converted it into the Hospital for Lame, Maimed, and Sick Soldiers, of which he and his former fellow-student, John Armstrong, were the Physicians. The Hospital was part of the military establishment. John received his appointment—doubtless on Pringle's recommendation—from the King. In the confusion of the times, the appointment seems to have been

* M'Laurin's death in 1746, and William Armstrong's in 1749, were both attributed to the Rebellion.

omitted from the *Gazette*; but it is recorded in the *Scots Magazine* of 3rd February 1746.

What part George took in the rebellion is not yet known. As his name does not appear in any available list, printed or unprinted, of the naval or military medical services of the Crown, it was probably a modest part. It, however, sufficed to enable him subsequently to practice in London without further sanction. The archives (note 11) of the Barber-Surgeons, the Society of Apothecaries, and the Company of Surgeons show that none of these corporations granted a franchise, or licence, to George. Yet, after the Rebellion of 1745-46, George was a general practitioner in London. Such unlicensed practice was seldom tolerated except in former members of the armed medical services.

The earliest known reference to George in London is in a note from John to Wilkes (note 12), which concludes: "My brother sends you his best compliments." It was written at "Curseder Alley"—now Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane—where John was practising; and was dated 17th January 1750.

Notes

1. "Exercise is," according to Longmuir and Donaldson, "a critical explication of a passage of scripture, at a meeting of Presbytery, succeeded by the specification of doctrines contained in it, by another. The second speaker is said to add."

2. The Minutes of the Chirnside Presbytery, and the *Castleton Kirk Session Records*, are in the Library of the Church of Scotland, in the Parish Church of Tolbooth St Johns, Castlehill, Edinburgh, under the care of the learned and Reverend John Campbell, D.D.

3. Chalder. A grain measure, nearly eight quarters.

4. Exclusive of the manse and the glebe, the living was worth in 1653, according to R. B. Armstrong, seventy pounds, ten shillings sterling; in 1795, according to Sinclair, eighty-three pounds, six shillings, and eightpence. The average annual increment was thus one shilling and ninepence three farthings. During the University period at the manse, 1720-31, the average annual value of the stipend was about seventy-seven pounds, eleven shillings. The rent of the glebe is hard to determine. The cited authorities do not estimate it. It may have been paid in produce or service. In such a sparsely settled district, its monetary value may have been only nominal. Rogers (III, 208) reports rents of four to ten shillings an acre in 1750 for "infield" land in Kincardine. At seven shillings an acre, the arable part of the glebe might have yielded four pounds, four shillings a year. In any event, during the University period the Reverend Robert's annual stipend from all sources, averaged less than eighty-two pounds sterling.

5. Neither the opening nor the closing date of the class was invariable. The regular class usually occupied from October to May. In 1725, M'Laurin lectured from 1st November. In 1736, Pringle started on 4th November. The Magistrand class in Philosophy seldom concluded before August. In 1741, the Latin class opened on October 1st and ran "till July or August."

6. Thomas Boston is the classic example of the indomitable Scot, studying

while he starved. In 1691, according to his *Memoirs* (p. 18), his board and lodging cost about one English shilling a week. Grant (II, 488) quotes Principal Lee, who, testifying before the Commission of 1826 on the extreme frugality of the students, said : " I will mention the instance of a young man whose expenses average six shillings and nine pence per week ; this includes room and fire for which he pays three shillings a week." For John Armstrong, some thirty years after Boston and a century before Lee's young man, an estimate of two shillings and elevenpence a week has been made—twenty shillings Scots for board, and fifteen for room, including candles and coal. On this arbitrary scale, John's maintenance at Edinburgh for a session of seven months, or thirty weeks, was computed at four pounds, seven shillings, and sixpence in English money.

7. Before Principal Carstares reorganised the teaching about 1708, instruction at Edinburgh was given mainly by tutors, or regents. On entering the University, the student selected a regent to tutor him throughout the course. From the same regent, he successively learnt Latin, Greek, Logic, and Ethics. In 1691, Boston (p. 15) enrolled with the regent Kennedy, " my father having given him four dollars, as was done yearly thereafter." The dollar was the coin the English called a crown, and was worth five of their shillings. The regents class fee was twenty shillings, or one English pound. Graham (p. 457) calls it a guinea. Twenty shillings was the original worth of the guinea. Its value varied till 1717, when it was fixed at twenty-one shillings. When the Arts Faculty was constituted in 1708, certain regents were made professors. According to Dalzel (II, 303), the salary the Town paid a professor then was twenty-two pounds, four shillings, and fivepence sterling a year. To supplement this pittance, the professor charged the student the customary class fee of twenty shillings sterling. Except Monro, the medical professors were unpaid. In that Faculty the class fee was three guineas.

8. Murdoch states that Thomson's " poem of Winter was published in March, 1726." When Armstrong's ode was ultimately published in his *Miscellanies* (1770), it was preceded by the statement : " The following imitation of Shakespeare was one of our author's first attempts at poetry, made when he was very young. It helped to amuse the solitude of a winter passed in a wild romantic country ; and what is rather particular, was just finished when Mr Thomson's celebrated poem upon the same subject appeared. Mr Thomson soon hearing of it, had the curiosity to procure a copy of it by means of a common acquaintance. He showed it to his poetical friends, Mr Mallet, Mr Aaron Hill and Dr Young, who it seems, did great honour to it ; and the first mentioned gentleman wrote to one of his friends at Edinburgh, desiring the author's leave to publish it, a request too flattering to youthful vanity to be resisted. But Mr Mallet altered his mind ; and this little piece has hitherto remained unpublished."

9. Graham says (p. 462), there was a fee of one guinea to the regent on laureation. According to Grant (II, 265), the laureation fee later fell to the Professor of Natural Philosophy, whose class concluded the course in Arts.

10. In the correspondence of Lord Liverpool deposited in the British Museum, there is a letter (LXIV, Folio 171) dated " 6 Deans Row, Walworth, June 12th, 1813," from George Armstrong's widow, in which she states : " My husband died the 21st of July in the year 1789."

11. His name does not occur on any of the published lists of these three corporations in the British Museum. The courteous officials at the Guildhall

Library, where the archives of the Barber-Surgeons are at present housed, formally vouched for its absence. There is no index to those enfranchised by the Society of Apothecaries ; but unrestricted access to the Society's records, together with the tireless and skilled help of the Secretary, Ernest Busby, Esq., in searching them, uncovered no sign that George Armstrong ever practised under the ægis of this ancient and worshipful Society. W. R. Fanu, Esq., M.A., the Librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, kindly made certain that the name of George Armstrong never was listed in the records under his care. The search of the service records at the Public Record Office was less conclusive, but equally unavailing.

12. Add. MSS., British Museum. John Wilkes' Correspondence. Vol. I, 1739-63, No. 30,867.

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